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ABSTRACT

The influence of the home environment on the original thinking of 66 Indian preschoolers was investigated. Subjects were 36 boys and 30 girls (mean age, 4.6 years) randomly selected from a pool of 127 children from 7 classrooms in a preschool run by a quasi-governmental corporation. Tests were given in the child's first language, which was either the regional language Gujarati, or the national language Hindi. Tests employed were the Multidimensional Stimulus Fluency Measure and the Home Observation for the Measurement of the Environment. No significant sex or age differences were found on measures of ideational fluency. Data indicated the existence of a response hierarchy, with popular responses occurring earlier in the response sequence. These results were consistent with studies done in other cultures. When original thinking scores were examined in relation to the quality and quantity of stimuli available in the home (assessed through the HOME inventory developed by Caldwell--1978), significant negative correlations were found between social responsiveness and stimulation of academic behavior and original thinking. Analyses indicated that high scores on these categories may reflect a structured home environment and directive types of parent-child interaction that are thought to adversely affect the free flow of thought and expressiveness. (RH)

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Sociocultural Influences on Creativity of Preschoolers in India

Abstract

The influence of the home environment on original thinking of sixty-six Indian preschoolers was investigated. No significant sex or age differences were found on measures of ideational fluency. The existence of a response heirarchy with popular responses occurring earlier in the response sequence was consistent with studies done in other cultures. Original thinking scores were examined in relation to the quantity and the quality of stimulus available in the home. Significant negative correlations were found between social responsiveness and stimulation of academic behavior and original thinking. Post-hoc analyses indicated that high scores on these categories may be reflecting a structured home environment and directive types of parent-child interaction that are thought to be adversely related to free flow of thought and expressiveness.

Aim

Ideational fluency has been cited by numerous theorists and researchers as an essential component in the process of creative or original problem-solving (Guilford, 1956, 1967; Mednick, 1962; Wallach & Kogan, 1965). These theorists contend that there is a relationship between the quantity of response and its quality such that the generation of many potential ideas leads to original solutions (i.e. responses that are statistically unusual and of high quality). Studies have provided evidence indicating the Guilford-Mednick conceptualization of original thinking as applicable to preschoolers (e.g.Moran, Milgram, Sawyers, & Fu, 1983).

Further, findings demonstrating existence of a response hierarchy have been replicated in samples of Israeli preschoolers (Milgram, Moran, Sawyers, & Fu, 1987) and Paraguayan preschoolers (Marcos & Moran, 1987). No significant relationships have yet been identified between original thinking in preschoolers and parental original thinking and/or parental styles (Fu, Moran, Sawyers, & Milgram, 1983; Ryan, 1984). The influence of the cultural and home environment on original thinking in a non-Western culture, India was assessed in this study.

Sample

The subjects were thirty-six boys and thirty girls (mean age = 4.6 years) randomly selected from a pool of 127 children from seven classrooms in a preschool run by a quasi-government corporation. The criteria used for the initial screening included age, sex, language spoken at home and socio-economic status. The final sample of sixty-six boys and girls were from the middle and lower-middle socio-economic level of Indian society. All the tests were given in the child's first language which was either the the regional language Gujarati or the national language Hindi.

Instruments

Multidimensional Stimulus Fluency Measure.

The MSFM developed by Moran, Milgram, Sawyers, & Fu, (1983) consists of three subtests - patterns (two 3-D shapes), uses (box and paper) and instances (red and round). Multiple responses elicited for each stimuli

item were scored as popular or original, that is, given by more or less than 5% of the entire sample respectively.

Home Observation for the Measurement of the Environment.

The quantity and quality of the stimuli available to the child in the home was assessed through the HOME inventory (Caldwell, 1978). There are eight subscales that focus on parent-child interactions and learning opportunities. The fifty-five item checklist was completed through observations and an interview with the mother/guardian in the child's home.

Results

Consistent with findings in other cultures, no significant age or sex differences were found among the Indian preschoolers.

The means obtained on the MSFM with the present sample of Indian preschoolers (popular:13.21 and original:24.60) were similar to those obtained with Israeli preschoolers (Milgram, Moran, Sawyers, & Fu, 1983). The existence of a response hierarchy was also replicated; original responses increased from the first half to the second half [$F(1,64)=54.47$, $p<.001$].

Original thinking was related to positive social responsiveness scale ($r=-.22$, $p<.05$) and to the stimulation of academic behavior scale ($r=-.24$, $p<.05$) indicating that high scores on these home environment variables meant low scores on original thinking scores. Post-hoc analyses indicated that high scores on these two HOME scales reflected a structured home environment and directive types of parent-child interaction that are thought to be adversely related to free flow of thought and expressiveness in young children.

Conclusion

Findings from this study demonstrated that the Guilford-Mednick conceptualization of creativity as ideational fluency is applicable to preschoolers in a non-Western society.

Researchers using a variety of measures to assess the influence of parenting behaviors and/or attitudes on children's creativity have generally found no significant relationships.

In contrast the findings from this study indicate that the Caldwell HOME inventory has potential for identifying thse aspects of the home environment that are related to original thinking.

It appears that aspects of both the quantity and quality of the social, emotional and cognitive support available to the young child in the home have an impact on original thinking.

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